

Japan.

CHRISTIAN LITERATURE FOR JAPAN

PROPOSAL
FOR A
PERMANENT COMMITTEE
ON
CHRISTIAN LITERATURE





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TO THE MISSIONARY BOARDS AND SOCIETIES WHOSE MISSIONS IN
JAPAN CONSTITUTE THE CONFERENCE OF FEDERATED MISSIONS.

TO THE
DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS OF THE

DEAR BRETHREN,

A plan for an organization to provide Christian literature having been before the Boards for a year, we desire to ask for replies from the Boards and Missions which have not yet announced their decisions, and to report progress to those which have approved the plan.

Before we report progress, allow us to glance back to show how the proposed plan has gradually won approval. The Conference of Federated Missions appoints each year a Committee on Christian Literature and this plan was first brought before the Missions by the Committee for 1908. The Committee for the following year was able to propose a definite plan to the Federated Missions at their meeting held in January, 1910; and the Committee for 1910 was authorised to make an appeal to the Boards which is substantially the same as that reprinted on pp. 3-8 of this letter.

The result is that out of the twenty-three bodies constituting the Conference of Federated Missions twenty have approved this plan; and the following Boards* have pledged an annual appropriation of ten *yen* for each missionary (see p. 7):—

* The British and Foreign Bible Society and the Church Missionary Society approve the plan, but are unable to make appropriations.

MISSION BOARD.	MISSION-ARIES.*	MISSION BOARD.	MISSION-ARIES.
American Baptist 62		Methodist Protestant 19	
American Board 71		Presbyterian (North) 71	
Canadian Methodist 39		Reformed Church in America ... 25	
Churches of Christ† 13		United Brethren 6	
Methodist Episcopal (West Japan)... 27		Y. M. C. A. 16	

As pledges are needed for only 51 more missionaries, we feel justified in planning for the beginning of the enterprise immediately after the next meeting of the Conference of Federated Missions which will be held in January, 1912.

In accord with the provision stated on p. 7 we are not authorised to call for performance of the pledges until the total number is such as to provide an annual appropriation of *Yen* 4,000. It is most important that the first annual appropriation should be in hand by next January, we therefore earnestly request the Secretaries of those Missions whose Boards have not yet replied (or whose replies, at least, have not reached the Secretary of the Federated Missions), to take such steps as they consider best to obtain an early reply.

In view of the importance of this expression of the unity, and the unified work, of the Federated Missions, the Committee on Christian Literature for 1911 ventures again to call the attention of the Missions to the proposed form of organization (see p. 6) which has had their general approval, but which needs to be acted upon by the Conference of Federated Missions in order to become effective.

It should be noted that nothing has been definitely decided, except that some organization is necessary. In speaking of the proposed body we have used the name Committee, but it seems probable that, sooner or later, we shall have a "Christian Literature Society for Japan" corresponding to similarly named societies in India and China.

In order that the Missions may give renewed attention to this matter, we request the Secretaries of the Missions to supply each member of their respective missions with a copy of this letter.

* The figures are approximate.

† The appropriation is at the rate of five *yen* for each of the 27 missionaries.

I. THE SITUATION AND THE NEED.

No argument is needed to prove the importance of a Christian literature suitable to the Christianization of a people so well educated as the Japanese. They are ready for the Gospel as never before, and the beginning of the second fifty years of modern missionary work should be marked by an earnest and vigorous effort to produce a powerful and effective literature to counteract the agnostic and materialistic influences that have come from Western nations, as well as to overcome the pantheism and other erroneous tendencies of thought that exist in the East.

Through its system of national education Japan is rapidly becoming a nation of readers. But what is the nature of its reading matter? If we may judge from what we hear from many quarters, while there is some excellent material, ethically regarded, in the better educational and literary magazines, and in a few daily newspapers, a considerable proportion of the matter in the public press is unwholesome and demoralizing. The impurity of Japanese popular novels, with a few notable exceptions, is an evil that all recognize and lament. Furthermore, practically all scholarly, scientific, ethical and philosophical works are frankly materialistic, agnostic, or pantheistic, and hence hostile to Christian thought and faith. Yet the insufficiency of the mere forms and instruments of the nation's civilization is increasingly clear to its thoughtful men. That intellectual education, alone, is inadequate to provide safeguards for the purity of the home, the integrity of business and the stability of the State, is being realized by the leaders of the national life. In a word, the need of religious foundations for morality is being recognized with increasing conviction.

But among the religions, to which shall they turn? Buddhism, Confucianism and Shintoism are all undergoing revival. Their hold on the nation is still much stronger than is generally supposed. They have great advantages over Christianity by reason of their antiquity, their illustrious history, their undoubted contributions to

the nation's life and the ease with which they may now be expounded to the people because of their intimate connection with the national language and literature. The real contest of Christianity with these faiths lies in the future. The thoughtful men of the nation are by heredity and patriotic sentiment predisposed toward these religions, even when their reason may lead to agnosticism or indifference, while they are naturally prejudiced against Christianity. The Christianization of Japan's cultured classes and responsible leaders, will, consequently, be neither rapid nor easy.

As Christians, therefore, we need to face the situation, to co-ordinate our forces and to close up our ranks so that every effort may be given its maximum efficiency. Hitherto each mission has carried on its own literary enterprise independently. The Bible Societies, indeed, in their co-operative and union methods, have done a splendid work. Some general Christian literature of real value has been produced. But most of it has fallen far short of the high standard demanded by the times. The Christian literature that will both attract and convince must be at once scholarly and popular, fitted to overcome agnostic, materialistic and pantheistic modes of thought by presenting in attractive form and with cogent logic the theistic philosophy and the fundamental truths of historical and evangelical Christianity. The conviction has, therefore, grown upon us that the needs can never be adequately met by the missions or by Japanese Christian publishing houses acting independently as at present. Waste through duplication and the lack of expert direction is inevitable. Inadequate capital and insufficient command of literary workers hamper every enterprise. A mastery of the situation is impossible.

It is to fill these deficiencies and meet these needs that we now propose to form a permanent and representative Christian Literature Committee. It will not displace existing agencies, for it will not itself undertake to publish and distribute literature. It will formulate a comprehensive program, secure adequate funds, and by drawing forth the talent of men of all the churches provide constructive, theistic

and evangelical literature for the existing publishing houses to print and distribute.

II. OUTLINE OF THE PROPOSED PLAN FOR MEETING THE NEED.

1. FORMS OF WORK.—Experience, together with the means available, will of course determine the specific activities. One of the first duties of the proposed Committee would be to provide a board of expert literary examiners whose function it would be to pass upon all manuscripts presented.

Payment for accepted manuscripts should be a fixed principle. It should be fairly generous. This is not only just to the writers, but it is important in order to call forth the best literary ability, already existing to no little degree among Japanese Christians; for, as a rule, they have but slender financial resources, and if they can make or supplement a living by producing first-class Christian literature, they will be stimulated to attempt it.

The Committee could secure the writing of books and articles by experts, the fruits of whose studies would otherwise never be given to the world. It could do this because of its own prestige, and, still more, because it could guarantee means for clerical aid, suitable remuneration and early publication.

Financial provision should be made for the publication of suitable manuscripts. Many such are now rejected by the Christian publishing houses for lack of funds. The production of solid works by Japanese Christian scholars familiar not only with the topics as treated in foreign works but also with current Japanese thought should be encouraged. Such works would influence their readers more deeply than most translated works. The specific forms of work to be undertaken are such as the following:—

a. *Translations*.—There is probably no more important and urgent literary work than the effective translation of standard Christian literature from foreign languages. This is an exceedingly difficult matter, but, if properly done, it promises large results. We

need to do for Japan such a work as is being done for India and China by their Christian Literature Societies.

b. Prize Tracts and Booklets.—The Christian Literature Committee might offer substantial prizes for satisfactory manuscripts on specified subjects. This method could be used especially to secure a constant flow of fresh material for tracts, booklets and articles for the Christian press. The dearth of recent tracts, adapted to present day conditions, is a constant source of dissatisfaction among Christian workers.

*c. A Biblical and Theological Magazine.**—One of the pressing needs of pastors and evangelists is a constructive Biblical, theological and philosophical magazine. Such a magazine could not expect to be self-supporting for many years, and yet the need for it is none the less imperative, for the Christian leaders will require the keenest weapons and stoutest armor if they are to overcome the forces of rejuvenated Buddhism, Confucianism and pantheism in addition to occidental materialism and agnosticism.

d. Utilizing the Daily Press.—A promising but hitherto neglected means of evangelization is the preparation of Christian material for use in the secular press. There are several hundred daily papers in Japan. Scores of these might be glad, at stated intervals, to fill a column or two with well edited, distinctively Christian news and discussions. By this means, great numbers of country people, hitherto untouched, could be to some degree evangelized with a very small outlay of time and money.

2. FINANCIAL SUPPORT.—The sum needed to finance the above work is estimated at *Yen* 6,000 (about £600 or \$3,000) per annum at the beginning; and it is suggested that each Board or Society contribute in proportion to its representation in the field—viz. about £1 or \$5 for each missionary.

3. PROPOSED ORGANIZATION.—I. The title shall be, The Christian Literature Committee of the Federated Missions.

* Since the above was written a magazine has been published which may be considered by the Committee to sufficiently meet the needs.

2. The members of the Committee shall be nine in number, of whom three shall be elected annually by the Federated Missions to serve for a period of three years. Not more than two members of this Committee shall belong to any one of the Federated Missions. At the first election, naturally, the nine members shall be elected in three groups to serve respectively one, two and three years.

3. The work of the Committee shall be to make provision for the inauguration and maintenance of the work outlined above and to use the funds. It should be recognized that the members need not themselves be literary experts, either in English or Japanese, as the duty of the Committee is merely to see that the work is entrusted to competent hands and properly performed.

III. DEFINITE REQUESTS.

In case the proposal meets with your approval, we now earnestly ask you :—

1. To pledge an annual grant at the rate of *Yen 10* (say, £1 or \$5) *per* missionary (including wives of missionaries and single women) in your Japan Mission. The pledge, however, shall be conditional upon similar pledges by other Boards and Societies, becoming effective only when the total pledges shall have amounted to *Yen 4,000 per annum*. This is the minimum amount on which the proposed plan can be hopefully undertaken.

2. To notify your Japan Mission of your approval or disapproval of the plan, also to send a similar notification directly to Dr. A. T. Howard, Secretary of the Federated Missions, Shimo-Shibuya, Tokyo.

3. In case you approve the plan and are ready to pledge an annual grant, will you kindly state the exact total sum, and also the date by which the Federated Missions may expect to receive your annual remittance. As soon as Secretary shall have received pledges aggregating *Yen 4,000*, he will inform you either directly, or through your Japan Mission, as you may prefer, and request the remittance of the first payment.

4. When the Committee shall have been established, one of its first and most important duties will be the selection of competent persons, foreign and Japanese, to undertake the actual literary work. The Japanese members will of course be supported by the funds at the disposal of the Committee. These funds, however, will be inadequate to the additional support of a missionary. We are therefore constrained to ask that the Mission and the Board or Society of which the foreigner selected is a member, will release him for this work, and also continue his support as hitherto. We realize that this request is a serious one, but it seems indispensable to the success of the enterprise. We sincerely trust, therefore that the Mission and the Board or Society on which this responsibility may rest will regard it not as a burden but rather as an honor to take a leading part in a work fraught with important consequences to the entire nation as well as to the Christian body itself.

Praying that God may so guide our thoughts and wills that we may all most effectively proclaim the riches of His love in Jesus Christ our common Lord and Saviour, we are,

Fraternally yours,

A. D. HAIL, *Chairman*,
G. CHAPMAN,
G. M. FISHER,
S. L. GULICK,
C. K. HARRINGTON,
W. IMBRIE,
D. R. MCKENZIE,
F. MULLER,
F. PARROTT,
D. B. SCHNEDER.

} Representing
the Federated
Missions.

